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ABSTRACT

The growing number of part-time instructors teaching in community colleges poses both disadvantages and advantages for the teachers and students involved. Part-time teachers complain that the pay is low, fringe benefits denied, and there is no security in assignment or permanent employment. There is a lack of status with the full-time faculty resulting in minimal inclusion in the department, division, or total institution, little support from counselors and other auxiliary departments, no assurance of the small amenities such as a desk or a parking space, and peripheral contact with the information sources in the institution. On the other hand, the advantages that part-time instructors enjoy include opportunities for internships or to test different methods and techniques; a paying position offering college instructor status while permitting flexibility in scheduling; an escape from nonrewarding duties; some social contact; and a sense of accomplishment. In addition, older part-time students (the average age is approximately 30) benefit from teachers with some "life experience" and part-time instruction is less expensive for the institution than contracted and tenured instruction. (MAI)

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PART-TIME INSTRUCTORS: TWO POINTS OF VIEW

BY

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Some things are easy to define; other things, hard. Richard Hagemeyer, President of Central Piedmont Community College and the League for Innovation in the Community College, believes that part-time instruction cannot be defined until an acceptable definition of full-time instruction is formulated. But, life goes pragmatically on, and part-time instruction is an inescapable reality in a community college. So - what is it?

Let's try a comparison. One workable definition of science fiction says, "Science fiction is whatever I point to when I say science fiction." The person currently standing under the finger, when pointing is resorted to in order to define a part-time instructor, is one teaching less than the number of weekly hours normally assigned to a full-time contracted instructor. This does not include a part-time instructor, usually called a substitute, who teaches on a day-to-day basis as needed. This definition is used extensively in colleges not yet constrained to be more precise by law or collective bargaining agreements. The collection of part-time instructors is as diverse as a shelf stocked with science fiction books, but they have several things in common.

Expressed in open or covert ways, part-time instructors have a list of complaints. They feel, and suffer from, the inequity of the low status of part-time instructorhood. These people working out of the main-stream have these complaints:

1. The pay is low; remuneration ranges from $192.00 to close to $1,000.00 per three-hour class per term.
2. All fringe benefits are denied.
3. There is no security regarding continuous assignment; a part-time instructor is subject to being "bumped" from a course, for which preparation has been done, if a full-time instructor has to be reassigned to that course in order to have a full schedule.
4. It is difficult to arrange out-of-class contact with students.
5. False hopes are nurtured that part-time instructing will automatically insure an instructor a full-time position should one be opened.
6. Minimal inclusion in department/division/total institution orientation, development, contact, planning or decision making.
7. A minimum of support is available from counselors, media services or supervisors for those who teach non-standard hours. The chairperson of a department is normally the guide responsible for part-time supervision. The amount of attention received from these over-burdened semi-administrators is small and may reach the vanishing point for part-time instructors assigned to off-campus locations any distance from central administration.
8. There is a lack of status with full-time faculty despite the fact that much innovation is fed into a department by part-timers.

9. There is no assurance of even the small amenities: being named on the printed schedule; having space on both a desk and a parking lot; an accessible mailbox; classroom doors unlocked or keys to do one's own unlocking.

10. A part-time instructor is placed on the periphery of the communications network resulting in lack of information dealing with exam schedules; grade deadlines and other housekeeping matters.

For these reasons, part-time instructors are yelling "Exploitation!" If all these aspects were included in the environment of a science fiction story, it would be labeled a Dystopia - the opposite of a Utopia.

But there are some utopian aspects to the part-time scene. There must be, or the number of part-timers instructing on community college campuses would not be climbing at the current rate. A national average is somewhere between 50% and 80% of part-time faculty in comparison to full-time. (In the English department of one midwestern community college, there are ten people eager for each part-time slot. Within the last six months two highly qualified instructors have offered to teach classes without pay just to get some experience.) Part-time instructors find mitigation in several ways and appear for any class assigned to them ready to teach.

They observe these advantages in being part-time instructors:

1. It is one method of serving an internship in an over-crowded field.

2. It is an opportunity to test different techniques and materials. Having contact with only one or two classes leaves time and energy for planning and preparation which a full five-class load does not.
3. It provides some money, be it primary or secondary income.
4. It gives whatever status there is in being a college instructor.
5. It allows a teacher's work schedule to be co-ordinated with other responsibilities.
6. It is possible to teach in the area of highest expertise and interest leading to high regard of the students. Part-time teachers receive laudatory student evaluation: "You obviously enjoy what you are doing," "I wish I could have you for all of my English classes."
7. It is an escape from non-rewarding duties. Wallace Stevens walked out of his office as president of a large insurance company and into his study to write poetry; educated housewives walk into classrooms to receive the adrenalin high a well-taught class supplies.
8. It provides some colleaguiality with an intellectual community which can be an anti-loneliness factor.
9. It satisfies the need to make a whorthwhile contribution, to do something of lasting value.
10. It can put a part-time instructor in a favored position with a supervisor who knows part-timers will relieve a tight budget, can be separated with little difficulty in case of declining enrollment thereby

protecting the contracted instructors, can be secured to staff outpost classes, and could be used if a strike should disrupt regular staffing.

For these reasons, and others as well, many instructors prefer to be part-time. A taste of Utopia can be derived from things of this sort.

So, that's the situation: Dystopia-Utopia, bad aspects/good aspects, Ying vs. Yang, push and pull. It can be hoped that a position of balance can be aimed for because the part-time instructor is an intregal part of a community college's structure.

One reason for large numbers of part-time instructors is the changing nature of the institutions. Statistics regarding current enrollments in community colleges and K through 12 project a 17% reduction in the next decade can be expected in freshmen enrolling directly from high schools. Today's community college students are not the same demographically as the community college students of the 60's. The average age is approaching thirty and the percentage of part-time students is increasing. California now records 2/3 of its enrollment in the part-time classification. These part-time adult learners are responding to courses presented at the right time in the right places. (A survey reported by Edmund Gleazer shows that 55% prefer to learn at home, 20% at there job sites, and 35% at school locations.) Mature students also prefer instruction from teachers "who have been there," who have life experience

to add dimension to theory and philosophy. It is possible that community college students have changed more than have the community college full-time faculties in the last decade.

On the other hand, part-time faculty (ready, willing and able to teach odd hours in bizarre locations) will become a larger segment of instruction in community colleges that prosper. The correlation between part-time students and part-time instructors will continue. The diversity of background and availability insures that it will be part-time instructors who stand behind the lecterns in the classrooms geared for Life Long Learning.

Beyond availability, there are economic factors. The American taxpayer is becoming frustrated with continually higher costs for welfare and Medicare. Education can expect to be served increasingly smaller slices of the fiduciary pie, necessitating small slices for instruction which is the largest part of a college budget. Part-time instruction is less expensive than contracted and tenured instruction. It would appear as if part-time faculty will be on the increase in the foreseeable future.

How are they to be accommodated? Orientation, support services and supervision need to be given added time and monetary consideration. These are mainly administrative tasks. But full-time faculty, too, must become aware of the contribution made by part-time faculty, the responsibility of full-time faculty for maintaining quality and content in all classes assigned to their area, and a more egaliterian outlook toward the adjunct instructors. Bargaining units might well plan for the inner-mingling of the two faculty groups.

John Lombardi believes that the next half-decade will witness faculty organizations sponsoring greater membership drives to recruit part-time instructors. Some sentiment has developed for separate organizations for part-time instructors, an actuality now in New York and Washington. Inclusion of part-time instructors should become standard at department, division and all-college meetings (even Christmas parties) for it will help to homogenize the groups. Neither group is made up of bugged-eyed, green beings from another planet.

Science fiction critic Damon Knight believes that science fiction is the only viable literary genre for the 1970's; it is a forward slanting myth predicting possible futures. The community college is an educational institution with the possibility of a very healthy future, a future that can be predicted to be strong if all components of an institution are given rightful attention. Part-time instruction and the people who do it deserve greater attention.

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